3:Stone E-5 (1945) 1949

SA19 Talamanca SA19
Boruca

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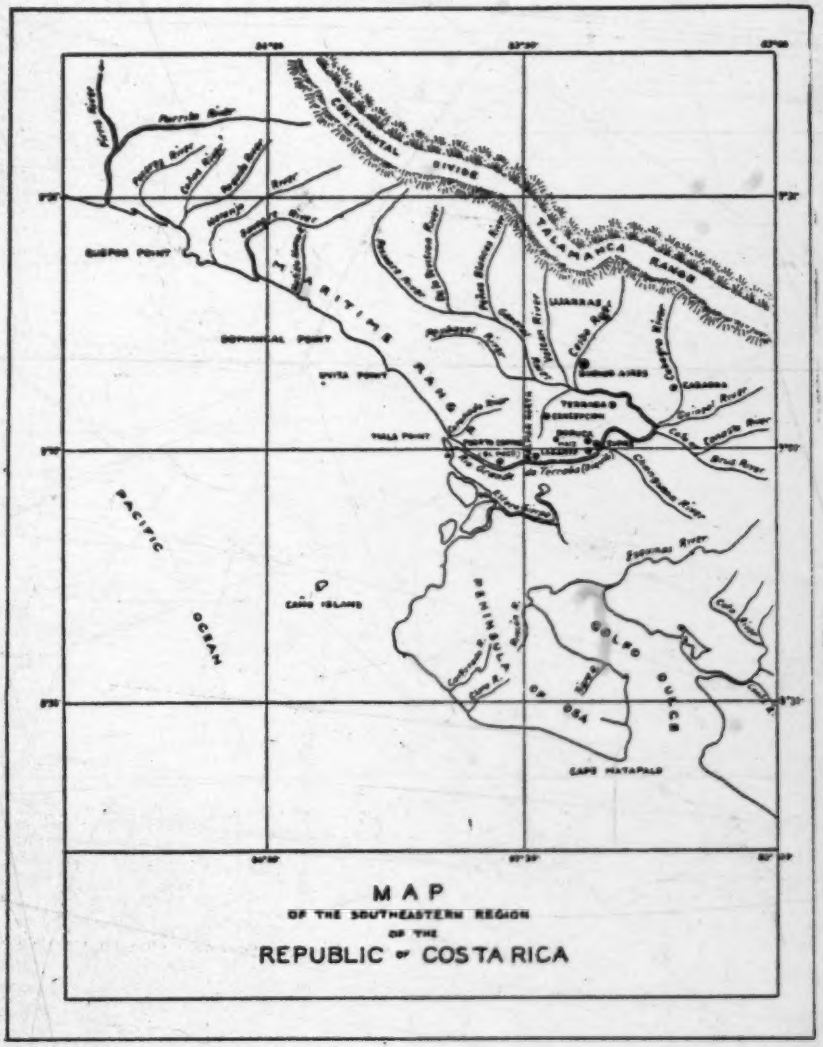

FIG. 1. Map of the southeastern region of the Republic of Costa Rica.

[p. ii]

GEOGRAPHY

131 THE country of the *Boruca* lies in the southeastern section of Costa Rica (see fig. 1, frontispiece) starting from the upper end of the flood plain of the Río Grande de Térraba, or, as we prefer to call it in the present paper, the Diquís River. *Diquís* is the older
103 appellation, and is the name most frequently used in Costa Rican geographies, being an Hispanic form of the *Boruca* words *dik*, meaning "water" and *krit* or *krjta*, meaning "large." It is from this also that the term *Río Grande* or "Large River" has evolved. The name *Térraba* is more recent, and is due to the one-
[101] time important community of *Térraba* Indians who were moved to the upper reaches of the Diquís River from the Talamanca region around 1700 by Fray Pablo de Rebullida.[1]

131 The land of the *Boruca* follows the river northward on both sides to a short distance above Curré. This territory includes the section of the Changuena River on the east, and most of the Cordillera Bruqueña, which is the Maritime Range, on the west and east.
162 Within this limited area, the *Boruca* have five
361 settlements. The largest of these is Boruca with forty-seven houses, and three hundred and thirty-four inhabitants, the majority of whom can be classed as Indian without *ladino* or white

[Text continues on top of page 3-B]

EARLY

101 What was included in the original territory
175 of the *Boruca*, we cannot say. The term, which we find spelled *Burucac*, appears to have been first used by Juan Vázquez de Coronado in a letter to the king, written in 1563.[2] He unfortunately does not delimit their location. It is obvious, however, that they formed a single unit or tribe. Throughout the early literature, allusion is made to the *Borucas* as *indios infieles y de guerra*,[3] who apparently fought with many of their neighbors as well as the Spaniards. Later during the Conquest, the term was applied to

[Text continues at bottom of p. 3-B]

[1] Fernández, 1907, tom. IX, p. 502; tom. III, p. 327, footnote 8. Peralta, 1938, p. 425 gives the date 1697 for the transferal of these people.

[2] Vázquez de Coronado, 1908, p. 37.

[3] See Fernández, 1907, vol. VIII, pp. 99, 462.

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GEOGRAPHY

mixture. The next largest community is Palmar Norte, on the western bank of the Diquis River, at the start of the flood plain. This has a population of one hundred and seventeen Indians, but, unfortunately, many *ladinos* are seeping in due to its proximity to the farms of the United Fruit Company and the Costa Rican town of Puerto Cortés (formerly "El Pozo"). There is one other large village of Indians, Curré, on the western bank of the Río Grande. This is the northernmost settlement of the *Boruca*, and has one hundred and three inhabitants, and fourteen houses. The other sites might well be called by the Spanish term *aldeas* or hamlets. Lagarto, also on the western bank of the river, has fifteen Indians and three houses. The rest of the tribe is scattered in locations which should be classed as *ladino* towns, such as Maíz, which was once all Indian, but now has only twenty-six Indians, Puerto Cortés which has fourteen, and Buenos Aires which has seven, some of whom are not pure. According to the census taken by the school teachers in Boruca, there are about twenty-five Indians who live isolated in the forest, many on the banks of the Changuena River, making a total of six hundred and forty-one *Boruca* Indians in 1945.

HISTORY

a province on the Pacific coast which apparently extended from the territory of the *Quepos* Indians to the River Chiriquí Viejo in Panamá.[4] Around the year 1608, or a little earlier, Fray Alonso de la Calle went alone to the *palenques* or fortified houses of the *Boruca*, and succeeded in converting and pacifying them. Fray Alonso appears to have gathered some of these Indians and formed a town.[5] Certain it is that by 1649, there was a town known as Boruca,[6] and by 1666, the term *Boruca* had ceased to be associated only with the people of that name, but included

[4] See Peralta, 1900, pp. 81, 218; Fernández, 1886, vol. V, p. 428.
[5] Fernández, 1907, vol. VIII, p. 99.
[6] Fernández, 1907, vol. IX, p. 364.

177 Ricans has unfortunately gained in degree
648 since the advent of the vanguard of road-builders for the Pan-American Highway. To date, they have, however, managed to keep relatively free from inter-mixture either by marriage or by cohabitation with non-Indian

[Continued p. 5-B, first paragraph]

VILLAGES

● 361 The village of Boruca is situated in a low depression on undulating hills, about 6 miles inland from the River Diquis (see fig. 3, *a* and *b*) and at an altitude of approximately 466 [132] meters. As a rule, the day-time temperature is between 75 or 78 degrees F. The nights are fairly cool, and during the dry season, fog or a very heavy mist is common in the early morning often lasting as late as eight or nine o'clock. These hillocks have been cleared of forest, and are quite bare save for a few scattered shade or fruit trees. There are no [363] streets, but several narrow foot and animal paths extend through the town. The Indians are accustomed to pick their way over the grass to the houses which are scattered over and in between the hillocks, forming a picturesque panorama which can be best seen from the summit of the two tall hills which flank the village on the northern and southeastern sides, respectively. Eastward, a trail leads down to a mountain spur which extends in a northeastern direction toward Curré, some 6 miles distant. Formerly, Boruca had [346 177] a *cabildo*, or town hall. Today, this has disappeared, and the wooden schoolhouse and church with its haphazard wire fence are the only semblances of *ladino* architecture. [351 417] Although most of the houses have no fences, a very few have wooden ones, hemming in a garden with colored crotons, flowers, or some fruit trees. The school is starting a *manzana* [245] of vegetables and fruit trees on the outskirts of the town. A small creek, with tree- or 312 bush-lined sides, known by the Spanish name of *La Quebrada* or the Boruca name of *Tupsi*, flows through the community, supplying

[Continued p. 5-B, second paragraph]

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

241 **Farming.** The farms of the Boruca contain from three to five *manzanas*, a *manzana* usually comprising about ten thousand

[continued p. 5-B, last paragraph]

[804] *A vara equals 33 inches.

peoples (see p. 26), and are, curiously enough, practically the only group in modern Costa Rica who have retained their indigenous dress, even though many of their customs have unfortunately disappeared.

VILLAGES

water for washing purposes. The drinking water is derived from springs which are located in the northern section of the town.

Curré and Lagarto are river hamlets, lying in the very narrow plain cut by the Diquís River in its upper course. They are low, unhealthy locations, the houses situated in dense forest and thickets. As a consequence, they are not open and fresh as Boruca, but closed-in, and, for many months of the year, mosquito ridden. These villages have even less the aspect of a formal town than Boruca. Narrow, almost imperceptible foot paths lead from one of the widely scattered and nearly hidden houses to the other. There are no churches or schools, and perhaps there is one fence in both communities. Water is obtained from shallow wells on the river bank, from small creeks, or from the river itself.

Palmar Norte is on a flat right on the river bank. The forest comes to the outskirts of the town, but unlike the other river villages, the community itself is open and free of the bush. Palmar Norte is obviously under *ladino* influence. Here, there is a definite attempt to lay out a "town" in the Spanish-American sense, with a *plaza* or square, a church, school, several saloons and stores, the houses all with fences, and broad, wide, grass-covered streets connecting blocks or squares. It keeps its indigenous characteristics in the still ample space or gardens around the houses, and, of course, their construction which, for the most part, is like that of Lagarto and Curré. Malaria is prevalent among the *Boruca*, who are, otherwise, an exceptionally healthy people.

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

square *varas*.[15] The farms are away from the village, and are generally fenced in. The fence is nearly always made with living posts,

3:Stone E-5 (1945) 1949

SAI9 Talamanca SAI9
Boruca

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[249
417]

[413
284]

a, b, Distant views of Boruca village. c, Blacksmith (actual size). d, Extraction of sugar cane juice.

continued to be Cabécar. Gabb [37] was the first to mention this as well as to recount the tradition of war between the Bribri and Tiribis which ended in 1827.[38] As a consequence, the winning Bribri became the political rulers of Talamanca. From this phenomenon, a King of Talamanca evolved.

At the time of Gabb, one family had the "hereditary right of chieftainship, and up to 1873, the reigning chief had theoretically full powers of government." [39] The chief was followed at his death by the best-suited person in the royal family, not necessarily the son. The situation in Talamanca at this period was so complex that a number of candidates for the position, all blood relatives, appeared. Each "King" was woefully lacking in preparation and was too firm an addict of alcohol. A sailor from Baltimore, Mr. John H. Lyon, who went to Talamanca in 1858 looking for fortune, fell in love with the country and made it his home. He had an Indian family and acquired such a strong position among these people that the Costa Rican government finally asked him to accept the task of governing the Talamanca. For the purposes of the present study, it is worth noting that the memory of the "King" still remains and the clan to which the "King" belonged has continued as a mixture of Bribri and Cabécar (*see* Social Organization).

The Southern Side of the Talamanca Range. South of the Talamanca Range two names are associated with the region under discussion, the Coto and the Turucaca as we noted before. None of these peoples exist today although their blood remains in that of the composite Boruca of southeastern Costa Rica.[41]

In this area, however, on the very slopes of the range, are two settlements of Bribri and one of Cabécares, while in the General Valley, west of Potrero Grande, a small group of Cabécares are located in China Kichá (Orange Root) [42] at the confluence of the Pejibayal with the General River.

upper Changuinola River in Panama, and who inhabited at one time the Zorquín River.

[38] *See* Fernández Guardia, 1918, p. 127.

[39] Gabb, 1875, p. 489.

[40] Gabb, 1875, pp. 489-91.

[41] Stone, 1949.

[42] *Kichá* also means "string or rope."

101 The two Bribri groups are to be found at
• 361 Cabagra [48] and Salitre (*ẍerí*) and amount to
[162] approximately 895 people. Cabagra lies near the pass to the upper Lari beside a river bearing its name which is an important tributary of the Diquís. It is about four leagues from Potrero Grande. The exact date of the arrival
[174] of Bribri here is not known although it was probably at the end of the 19th century as many of the older inhabitants were born on the Lari and Urén rivers. One tradition holds
173 that certain families fled across the Talamanca
166 Range because they had not adhered to clan
[614] regulations in marriage. It is perhaps of significance that very few clans form the groups in both places, and that as people, they are the first to divert from ancient tribal customs. Another popular belief is that Berchi, a king of Talamanca, caused numerous people to flee because of his extreme cruelty (*see* Folklore: *Recent History*). Some inhabitants of Cabagra moved westward to Salitre. Gradually, both places have grown as a result of the arrival of other families from the northeast as well as an increased birth rate.

At the end of the pass from the upper Coen is Ujarrás of the Cabécares which was settled for a similar reason at the same general time.
[582] It is said that "the King of Talamanca prohibited marriage between brothers [44] and one couple who had disobeyed the rules fled and went to Ujarrás." Others followed to the ex-
[Text continues TOP of P. 8(B) --Gwalys]

LANGUAGE

197 **Connections and Previous Studies.** The majority of linguists connect both the Bribri and the Cabécar tongues with Chibcha.[48] However, they are sufficiently removed from one another that they are not mutually interchangeable. The intellectually more advanced, but at
[191] the same time conquered, Cabécares generally understand and speak Bribri with exception of
[Text continues bottom of P. 8(B)] -Gwalys]

[103] [48] This name has no meaning in any existing tongue. The site should not be confused with N.S. de la Luz
[797] de Cabagra which was founded in 1745 by the Franciscan fathers and settled with Térraba Indians two leagues from San Francisco de Térraba. Fernández, 1907, vol. IX, p. 504.

[44] It should be remembered that these people are organized on the basis of matrilineal clans. (*See* Social

[P. 11(A)]

Bribri
Cabecar

177 many distinct degrees of acculturation. These will be touched upon in the course of this paper.

621 192 **Villages.** Villages in the European sense of the word are unknown and have always been non-existent as far as these peoples are concerned. Their very language denotes this fact. Neither in Bribri nor in Cabécar is there a word for town or city. The idea is understood [177] because of contact with the outside. In Bribri, city is expressed by *koṇ* (place or extension) *bLuburu* (much or great). Town is termed *koṇ* or *kę́* (*kę́* is "place" in the Cabécar tongue and also by adoption, but slightly modified by accent, in Bribri) and *kəbi* which means Cabécar. This significantly brings to mind the con- [121] quest of the Cabécares by the less-cultured Bribri. In Cabécar, city is also understood and is expressed by the word *buž̌iga* or, literally, *bu* (house) *ž̌iga* (many), and town by *kạ* meaning 621 "place" and also signifying Talamanca in the 361 sense of "our home."

When discussing this, the statement of Joan

[TEXT CONTINUES TOP OF P. 11(B)--ANALYST]

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

241 **Farming.** Agriculture differs according to the location. The people on the Pacific side have the advantage of both climate and education. Here planting is controlled by a marked wet and dry season, while physically there are wider valleys and gentler slopes. In Talamanca and Chirripó, planting is done at any time of the year although May is the favorite month. Cultivation is usually found on the steepest hillsides not only because flat land is scarce but also because this offers the best protection [231] against the inevitable pigs which are kept by the Indians for economic reasons.

The method of farming also varies slightly. The slash-burn technique is prevalent on the Pacific side, but on the other slope, excessive rains control the situation. Although occasional burning is carried out, the usual practice is to remove the small bush and to allow the rest of the downed forest to decay, chopping it with a machete to quicken the process. Instead of waiting until the wood has disappeared, planting is done in between the decomposing material.

[TEXT CONTINUES BOTTOM OF P. 11(B)--ANALYST]

621
361 Dávila must be remembered (*see* Regional Terminology) as well as the custom that each clan had to settle in a particular location (*see* Social Organization). In truth, one of the greatest points of contention between the
[648] aborigine and the Spaniard was the necessity of the conqueror to force the Indian to live in towns in order to carry out the task of conversion, to collect tribute, and to have an easy and constant source of labor. This concentration in a community was entirely foreign to the culture of the Talamancan peoples, and historical documents contain many allusions to the resistance of the Indians to such a move. There are countless sites with names, but even in the case of places such as Amubre, Chirripó, and Ujarrás where there is a church, or Cabagra, Salitre, and Ujarrás where there is a school, there is little semblance of what the word "village" brings to mind. Dwellings are scattered, sometimes two to five kilometers apart, and only on the Pacific side is there anything akin to a community center, in this instance the school.

SUBSISTENCE ACTIVITIES

241
[412] The only implement used in upper Talamanca and Chirripó is a flat, pointed digging
[824] stick made from the outer bark of the *pejibaye* palm (*Guilielma gasipaes* Bailey). This is stuck into the ground at a sixty degree angle and is then raised vertically. The seeds are thrown
[415] into this hole from a gourd tied around the waist (fig. 2, *c*), and the stick is removed permitting the earth to settle back. It is then tapped lightly in place with the stick. The
[411] belief persists that this tool was once a battle weapon.[60] The only other cultivation deemed necessary is one weeding with a machete. In
[412] the Talamanca Plain and on the Pacific slope, both the all-wood *macana* and one with a metal blade are seen; while on the Pacific side, an angle stick is used to clear the fields. It
249 is interesting to note that when tobacco is to be planted here there is no preliminary burning. This crop is sown in rows indicated by ...nes and pieces of banana stalk are put over the new growth to keep off too much sun.

[60] Skinner, 1920, pp. 70-71.

1/2 [See category 116, END Plate 1- Analyst]

[P.16(A)] SA19 Talamanca SA19

Bribri
Cabecar

372 it. Matches are fairly common outside of Alta
[177] Talamanca.

251 **Food Storage.** Storage of food in a separate
[243] shelter is not practised except in lower Chirripó where the custom to grow maize as a cash crop is developing. It must be remembered that the principal diet of these people consists of tubers and *pejibayes*. It is not easy to preserve tubers for eating once they are pick-
[415] ed. Most foodstuffs are kept in net bags or hung on rafters, occasionally in bark containers, or dehydrated over the fire. This last method is the one used for keeping *pejibayes* during the months they are not in season. When needed, the dehydrated fruit is put in
[184] a pot and boiled. On the Pacific slope, how-
[262] ever, such preservation of *pejibayes* is seldom practised. Here the people depend upon bananas and plantains during the lean months which in this area are from March to August.

272 **Beverages.** Contrary to popular opinion and the picture Spanish reports tend to draw, the most esteemed beverage among the Talamancan peoples is chocolate. This is the drink cited in their sacred theology (*see* Myths, *Theological Beliefs*) and the preferred drink given to the dead for their non-returnable
[796] journey. In fact, all ceremonies of any conse-
[574] quence require chocolate. It is also the most appreciated drink to offer a friend or to give to people of importance. The drink is pre-

[Text continues TOP of P.16(B)--Qualyst]

HOUSES

342 **House Types and Construction.** House types
[184] vary, depending upon the location. The orthodox Talamancan dwelling is large and round with a high conical roof of palm leaves, often with an old pot at the apex. In ancient times
175 it seems to have been a communal clan dwell-
342 ing called by the Spaniards a "palenque," whether or not there was a fence, housing up to three hundred people. The Spanish account furthermore reads:

[Text continues bottom of P.16(B)--Qualyst]

[74] Stone, 1949b, p. 10.

[75] De Espinosa, 1742, pp. 77–78. ". . . en que se congregan todos los de la familia de aquel linage, sin permitirse se *mezcle* uno con otro, y con esto se

[361]

6;Stone E-5 (1956-1959)1962
[P.16(B)] SA19 Talamanca SA19
Bribri
Cabecar

272 pared without any flavoring or sugar. The chocolate is made into a paste after the bean has been dried, fermented, and ground. Pieces of the paste are broken off as needed, water added, and the mixture stirred with a wooden stick generally made from a root with pronged ends. The paste is wrapped in white *bijagua* [824] [484] leaves (*Calathea insignis* Petersen) and is carried on trips or left in the house for future use.

273 [272] The most common beverage is chicha, although it never takes the place of chocolate, being used as a supplement to this drink, which is apt to be scarce, rather than as a competitor. In itself, chicha is nutritious and is taken by all ages and sexes, often in lieu of sufficient food. It is essential when heavy and group work is to be done and is also drunk at parties and ceremonies. Chicha can be made from a variety of foodstuffs, including plantains, *ñampi*, and pumpkin. The favorites, however, are *pejibaye*, yuca, and maize. In upper Talamanca and Chirripó, fermentation is usually brought about through human saliva obtained by chewing the foodstuff and spitting it into a large clay pot made for this [184] [484] purpose. On the Pacific slope and in the Talamanca Plain, a form of yeast is used to cause fermentation.[74] For traveling, chicha paste is wrapped in leaves or carried in a leaf-lined *hava* and water is added as needed.

272 A thick drink is made by adding water to mashed boiled ripe plantains.

HOUSES

175 342 [361] . . . in which are congregated all those of the same family lineage, without being permitted to mix with one another, and in this way they make themselves unavailable (to one another). The Palenques are located on the hill tops, which are almost inaccessible, and are ten to twelve leagues apart.[75]

342 [192] The modern house is known in both languages as *usurí*, *u* meaning "house" and *surí*, "the pointed fishing arrow." The name is particularly significant because of the extremely

hacen para sí incomerciables. Los Palenques los forman en la eminencia de los montes, que son casi inaccesibles, y distan a diez y doce leguas unos de otros. . . ."